

The computer 230 can access one or more servers via the local network 204 and/or the Internet 206. For instance, the computer 230 can access a local host server 210 via local network 204, and can access remote server 216 via the local network 204 and the Internet 216. The local host server 210 is coupled to database 212, and the remote server 216 is connected to database 214.

The servers 210, 216 may comprise, for instance, workstations running any one of a variety of programs, such as Microsoft Windows<sup>TM</sup> NT<sup>TM</sup>, Windows<sup>TM</sup> 2000, Unix, etc. The databases 212, 216 may be implemented as Oracle<sup>TM</sup> relational databases, or other data storage or query formats, platforms or resources.

FIG. 3 shows database memory 302 containing information describing the process shown in FIG. 1. The information includes a principal steps file 304 that includes first data that identifies the principal steps in the process. The information further includes a component substeps file 306 that contains second data that identifies the substeps in each respective principal step. The information also includes an attributes file 308 that contains third data that identifies attributes of the steps of the process. For instance, this file may store information concerning the approval steps, such as the criteria used to evaluate the viability of the project, and an identification of the authorizing agent assigned to make the evaluation. The information also includes a documents file 310 that contains fourth data that identifies the deliverable documents associated with each principal step. The information further includes a tools file 312 that contains fifth data that identifies the tools that can be used to perform analysis associated with each principal step and substep. The tools file 312 may contain merely a link to another storage location that stores the actual tools, or may contain the software code to implement the tools. The tools may include a series of worksheets used to perform analysis associated with various principal steps and substeps. The tools may also include other software programs to perform financial analysis, to access information, or to communicate with other computers. Finally, the database memory 302 also includes a prior analyses file 314 that contains sixth data that identifies previous projects initiated by the organization. This file may particularly identify beneficial practices of the previous projects.

Each of the files 304, 306, 308, 310, 312 and 314 may form distinct units of

information having separate addresses. Alternatively, these information files may represent merely separate information fields in a single addressable file. In either case, information stored in the five files is preferably cross-indexed to indicate how one field of information corresponds to other fields. For instance, the database  
5 preferably indicates the correspondence between the steps in files 304 and 306 and the documents in file 310 that are generated by each of the steps.

In a standalone computer application, the memory database 302 can be physically stored in one or more of RAM 224, ROM 226, and/or storage device 228. In a network application, the memory database 302 can be stored in server database  
10 212 or database 214, or duplicated in the memories of each network computer (e.g., each of computers 230, 232, and 234). Further, the files within memory database 302 can be downloaded from one or more server databases to the local memory within computers 230, 232 or 234.

FIGS. 4-6 illustrate an exemplary computer interface allowing a user to access  
15 the process information and perform the steps in the process. FIG. 4 shows an exemplary main (initial) page or screen. The page may comprise conventional graphic interface components, such as a main display section 402, a tool bar 406, and a menu bar 408. The main display section 402 includes a listing 404 of the principal steps in the process, namely: a first principal step for assessing the feasibility of the project to determine whether to proceed with the project; a second principal step for  
20 performing initial project analysis to determine the project's functional requirements; a third principal step for designing the IT product; a fourth principal step for building the IT product; a fifth principal step for testing the IT product; a sixth principal step for implementing the IT product; and a seventh principal step for closing-out the IT project, including evaluating the project. Each principal step entry in the listing may include a stored link (e.g., a hypertext link) that associates each principal step to a  
25 respective sub-page that lists its component substeps. For instance, activating the link for the second principal step (initiating the project) will cause the display of a sub-page describing the second principal step. An example of this page is shown in FIG.  
30 5 (to be discussed below). A link may be activated in a conventional manner, e.g., by clicking on the appropriate principal step text in FIG. 4 (e.g., note the cursor symbol

452 positioned on the second principal step).

The tool bar 406 contains an icon group 410 for use in accessing information relating to the process. Namely, a database icon 462 allows a user to query a database to retrieve a stored project file pertaining to one of a plurality of projects currently being carried out by an organization. The database icon 462 may also allow the user to access project files pertaining to projects that have been closed out (e.g., stored in file 314 of database 302). A deliverable icon 464 provides access to the deliverable documents generated by the process (for example, a charter document, risk form, etc.) Alternatively, this icon can access a database containing examples of prior completed deliverable documents. A “sign-off” icon 466 provides access to a master listing identifying those authorizing agents that are required to sign-off after the completion the principal steps. A help icon 470 provides access to information regarding the process. For instance, when the user sequentially activates the help icon 470 and the “initiation” principal step, the computer presents a detailed explanation of the tasks of this principal step. This step may also optionally provide access to a network (e.g., intranet or Internet) for retrieval of information regarding the process.

The tool bar 406 also contains an icon group 412 which provides access to various project management tools (that is, tools used in performing the project). For instance, a scheduling icon 472 provides a link to a software scheduling tool. The scheduling tool may allocate events in the process to timeslots, provide a detailed summary of the status of each step (including percent completed, duration, starting date, etc.), provide audible and/or visual reminders, etc. In one example, the Microsoft Project Plan™ program can be used. A worksheet access icon 474 provides a link to pre-stored worksheets. The worksheets serve as tools for analysis and may be tailored to a particular principal step or substep. Accordingly, these worksheets may be accessed and completed by the user at particular stages in the process. A CBA (cost-benefit analysis) icon 476 provides specific access to a cost-benefit analysis tool. This tool provides an evaluation of the costs and benefits of a particular project. A testing icon 478 provides access to one or more testing tools used to perform testing at various stages in project.

The tool bar 406 also may include an icon group 414 devoted to